



Sunbeams; Humor, Sarcasm, and Sense

George W. Peck was at times a writer, newspaper publisher and politician. Many of the Sunbeam essays had been published in Peck's paper, "The Sun", as amusing and often critical comments on social and political subjects, typically current in the beginning of the 1900's. Topics are often 'small town' United States, and Peck's gentle sarcasm or portrayals much resembles that of Twain.

Listeners must be aware that the Spanish American War was a recent event, leading to the "Yankee" involvement in the Philippines. Admiral Dewey, who figures in several of the writings, had the Olympia as his flagship. The Dwight, mentioned in 'A Bear with a Jag', may have been Charles Dwight Sigsbee, Captain of the Maine in 1898.. At this time the British Empire was in conflict with the Boers under Kruger, all topics of or mentioned in the early essays. In the slang of that time a "drummer" was a traveling salesman, while a trust was a financial combine with monopolistic powers. The title term "bimeatallic" likely is a take-off on the "bimetallic question", which referred to arguments over having gold and silver both as legal tender. Peck suggested, tongue in cheek, that there could be a 'standard' under which horsemeat should be disclosed as an ingredient of sausage. Indeed, many of the essays deal with questionable ingredients for foods, and were probably of high relevance to consumers who were without the regulatory protections and labelling requirements of today. In the same vein, the 'embalmed beef' served as rations to U.S. soldiers became notorious. (Summary by Arnold Banner)

Read by Arnold Banner and Melora; Proof Listener Nancy Banner.

Total running time: 5:35:04

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